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Mass Entertainment Industry

For The Week Ending March 9, 1985

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Eddie Murphy in fast start on 45-city tour

By PATRICIA BATES
Eddie Murphy, the "Beverly Hills Cop" in his current motion picture, will arrest audiences in 45 U.S. cities on a tour that began Feb. 26 at the
Continued on Page 9

Knoebels Groves acquires vintage coaster for 1985

By STEVE ROGERS
The Phoenix will rise again at Knoebels Groves, Elysburg, Pa., after park management purchased a vintage Philadelphia Toboggan Co. roller coaster from the defunct Playland Park in San Antonio, Texas, with plans to rebuild the ride for a June opening this year.

Park General Manager Dick Knoebel said the trains for the ride, originally erected in 1947, have already been shipped to Pennsylvania and are currently at the Philadelphia Toboggan plant in Lansdale, Pa., for refurbishing.
Continued on Page 21

Wrestling/rock package developing big following

By ANCIL DAVIS
GREENWICH, Conn. — Wrestling and the rock music industry have always exhibited outrageous similarities. The professional sport's action continues to stretch the boundaries of



SERVOMATION TO SOUTH BEND — Servomation Corp. has landed the food service contract at the Century Center, South Bend, Ind. Celebrating the signing are, from left, Brian Hedman, Century Center executive director; Douglas Stabler, assistant vice president-Midwest, Servomation Recreation Services; Dennis Barbato, Servomation; Randall Ziegler, assistant vice president sales, Servomation, and John Stancanti, finance and administrative director, Century Center. (See story on Page 15.)

Wash. State Convention Center spending millions on amenities to lure conclaves

By TOM POWELL
SEATTLE — Groundbreaking for the Washington State Convention Center here is scheduled for May 8, with the project completion date scheduled as September 1987.
Jerry Lowery, president and chief

executive officer of the center, pointed out the facility was fully funded two years ago.

"This will not be a typical convention center. In order to establish Seattle and the state of Washington as new stops for conventions, we are spending a lot more than usual on amenities. For instance, more than \$4 million is being spent on the stainless-steel lobby," said Lowery, "and \$3.5 million for landscaping. We will have two acres of park land and plaza. A 900-room hotel will share the concourse or gallery area."

Lowery, when interviewed in late January, said 14 bid packages were to go out the next month.

It was announced Feb. 20 that the structural steel bid package, the first of 14 separate construction packages, was advertised that week by the Howard S. Wright Construction Co., construction management firm for the convention center. The remaining bid packages will be advertised in March.

Working as a team with the Seattle-

King County Convention & Visitors Bureau and Seattle-area hotels, the center also reached a milestone in securing potential business for the facility.

More than 100 national convention groups have now booked space, 25 of which are confirmed for the city. Many of the 75 tentative groups are expected to move their dates into the definite category after construction starts.

These figures soared from 11 definite and 43 tentatives in December
Continued on Page 14

Attendance hits 218,312 at Indio Date Festival

By SAM ABBOTT
INDIO, Calif. — Paid attendance at the Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival here, Feb. 15-24, totaled
Continued on Page 23

Florida Citrus Festival turnout rises to 150,000

Attendance at the Florida Citrus Festival & Polk County Fair totaled 150,000 for the Feb. 14-23 run at Winter Haven. According to Sandra Fritz, in her first year as manager, the count is up 40,000 from 1983.

Fritz attributed the increase to a strong presentation by Reithoffer Shows, which brought in "one of the prettiest midways I've ever seen." She said Reithoffer Shows will return next year, but a contract has not yet been negotiated.

"The community was overwhelmed by the cleanliness and attitude of Reithoffer's (personnel), and the whole community was talking about the midway," she said. Fritz noted that the presence of several new rides was an asset.

"The community took a look and said it was beautiful. People were coming four and five times, and they
Continued on Page 24

Rotating beer distributors clicks for Wheeling venue

By PATRICIA BATES
Like time-sharing a condominium, the 7,650-seat Wheeling (W.Va.) Civic Center has four beer distributors in its house for about three months each of the year. Blatz, Stroh's, Iron City and Pabst commune there in a living arrangement that was agreed upon in advance by all parties.

Blatz had moved in by February but had to vacate the premises by March for Pabst. As renters, they rotate, taking turns in tapping 50 kegs apiece at the Civic Center. While they can't be "evicted" until an event is over, they do have an expiration date on their leases. But Pabst's time was
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AUDS & ARENAS

Little time left to fight proposed tax reform act, Wallace tells IAAM

By LINDA DECKARD
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas — Cliff Wallace, manager of the Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, and president of the International Assn. of Auditorium Managers (IAAM), advised attendees at the District VI conference here, Feb. 24-27, that time may be short to effectively fight the new tax reform act proposed by the Department of the Treasury.

The proposal has been sent by the U.S. Treasury to President Ronald Reagan and would, if passed, "impact negatively the sale of tickets," Wallace reported. Sports and performing arts tickets bought for entertainment purposes would not be tax deductible or allowable as a business expense, Wallace reported. The proposed tax reform would mean businesses could not buy tickets to a ballgame as a

write-off, for example.

The proposal in its current form reads that "no deduction would be allowed for entertainment expenses, except for certain business meals." A deduction would be allowed for ordinary and necessary business meals furnished in a clear business setting (as defined in Treasury Dept. regulations). For each person participating in each business meal, this deduction would be limited to \$10 for breakfast, \$15 for lunch and \$25 for dinner. The meal cost limitations would include gratuities and tax with respect to the meals.

The proposal would completely eliminate deductions for entertainment expenses such as tickets to professional sporting events and tickets to the theater. "Because all entertainment has a large personal compo-

nent, the proper tax treatment, on both efficiency and equity grounds, is to disallow a deduction...Approximately one-third of all baseball tickets and over one-half of all hockey tickets are purchased by businesses. The net effect is often to raise the cost of tickets for those who are not subsidized through the tax system for their purchases." Only those gifts valued at "less than \$25 would remain allowable."

The report concludes with the advice that "if public subsidy of such entertainment is desirable, a direct expenditure program could better target the aid. Further, current law raises serious equity questions by increasing the demand for tickets, thereby causing the price of tickets to rise for the general public."

The 72 IAAM members attending this convention were advised the fight might cost "thousands of dollars." Wallace asked if members would and could respond if an assessment of \$50 to \$100 per member were made. The money would be used to "get on the bandwagon with professional sports and performing arts groups, possibly even the circus and ice shows." That "consortium or coalition would make agents available to testify" to fight this proposal, Wallace said.

Reaction by district members was varied, but most felt an assessment would be acceptable if billed, not requested as a donation. Wallace contended that if action is not taken, this tax reform act could be another "copyright act," referring to the time the music licensing organizations got legislation enacted that assessed copyright fees from buildings and venues, rather than acts. That was "upon us before we could do a thing about it," Wallace said.

Ray Wilson, Hope Arena, Galveston, Texas, noted that the rodeo in Houston has an economic impact of \$160 million. That March event would be hurt considerably if it were not allowable as a business expense. "I would endorse a committee to get into it," Wilson said. Wallace later mentioned he is hoping the fair industry, along with food and drink concessions companies, will also join the proposed coalition to fight the reform act. Roy Saunders, Tulsa (Okla.) Public Facilities and IAAM second vice president, told AB the performing arts groups are also addressing this issue.

A copy of the tax reform for "fairness, simplicity and economic growth" suggests change is needed because "current standards are predominantly subjective, leaving application of the law uncertain and creating significant opportunities for abuse. Under present law the costs of country club memberships, football and theater tickets, parties and lunches and dinners at expensive restaurants are all deductible, if a plausible business connection can be demonstrated. The existing tests for whether a business connection exists are premised upon the taxpayer's expectations and intentions and thus may result in a deduction being allowed in cases where less time was devoted to business than to entertainment, no business was discussed, or the taxpayer was not even present at the entertainment activity."

The proposal contends that current

Continued on Page 14



DEALING WITH THE MEDIA — Howard Scott, left, administrative manager of television news for KOMO in Seattle, Wash., discusses investigative reporters with John Conway, right, Santa Clara (Calif.) Convention Center. Scott has been attending all of the International Assn. of Auditorium Managers district meetings, conducting the professional development seminar on dealing with the media. In this instance, he was seen in Las Vegas where District VII gathered in February. (AB Photo)

Wrestling/rock package developing big following...

Continued from Page 1
reach an estimated 1.8 million viewers across the country through closed-circuit television.

For those who've been out of the country in the past few years, professional wrestling has evolved from a blue-collar cult sport into high visibility entertainment. The transition has come about as the World Wrestling Federation gained a stronghold in America through massive local and cable television exposure, employing a propellant from one of the most unlikely sources — rock and roll.

The most recent encounter has been splashed across both the USA Cable Network and MTV as Captain Lou Albano and Cyndi Lauper, along with her manager David Wolff, squabbled over who actually helmed the rock singer to stardom. It began innocently enough with Lauper introducing herself to Albano when the two were on a flight to Puerto Rico a few years ago. Albano was scouting for new wrestling talent, and Lauper was traveling with her now-defunct band, Blue Angel, to play a date at Roberto Clemente Stadium. Their friendship grew, and Lauper incorporated some of Albano's business philosophy into her own, redefining his P.E.G. Principle (Politeness, Etiquette and Grooming) for herself.

She later asked him to appear in the video of "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," which was to become million-selling hit single that launched her career. Albano went public on the extent of his business contribution to her success, which immediately became a major point of contention between himself, Lauper and Wolff. The three have since gone to the mat, and embroiled so many WWF stars, that the battle has become a regular fea-

ture on both the USA Network and MTV.

Their most recent bout on MTV, live from Madison Square Garden on Feb. 18, pitted Hogan and Piper for the Heavyweight Championship of the WWF, where everybody emerged a winner. The cablecast, starting at 10 p.m. (EST), was seen in more than two million homes, which is an audience five times greater than that for the normal viewing period.

The difference between what audiences are exposed to now, and everything that came before, is just a matter of pronunciation. In the words of WWF President Vince McMahon, better known as the voice of professional wrestling, it's the difference between "wrassling" and wrestling.

"Wrestling has been traditionally a geographically fragmented industry," said McMahon, pinpointing the sport's progress under his guidance. "Different promoters have worked in different territories, but that's changed drastically. We've become aggressive in our posture. We're in arenas and auditoriums, but we're also on over 100 TV stations and cable. No one else even comes close. They're just not out there."

McMahon and the WWF are admittedly not the only game in town, but for all intents and purposes they might as well be. While promoters in the past have perhaps emphasized wrestling as a legitimate sport, and audiences have reveled in the sheer entertainment of it, McMahon embraces and expands on both of those aspects. The result is a unique organizational and marketing philosophy.

"We're in the entertainment business," said McMahon. "Our competitors think they're in the wrassling

Continued on Page 26

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Wrestling/rock package developing...

Continued from Page 17

business in the way that they approach things, but we've brought that entertainment vein into professional wrestling. If there is a stigma that's attached, it's because of our predecessors as producers, and most of them are former wrestlers. It's not really a sport or an entertainment in the purest sense of the word. It's in a category by itself. What we're trying to say is, 'Don't confuse it with anything else because it's the best of both worlds.'

If that happens to be true, then the best is destined to grow even better in 1985. McMahon estimates WWF will entertain 13 million fans live this year, playing approximately 1,000 shows in venues ranging from 2,000-seaters to 20,000 and up. Already in 100 television markets, McMahon says WWF will go into another 35 before year's end, while upgrading of signal by changing affiliates in some areas and changing time slots in others will also increase audience penetration. The purest example of that extended reach brought by the overlap of TV and live events is the upcoming March 31 match. Fans able to get tickets to the Garden event will pay between \$10 and \$100 for the privilege, while closed-circuit television viewers will pay between \$8 and \$12 for the same two-and-a-half- to three-and-a-half-hour event. The latter's average gross potential hovers around \$18 million, although McMahon notes that the figure is small in comparison to professional boxing matches.

"We're very conscious of providing family-oriented events," he said. "Our gross potential on something like this is nothing in comparison with a Hagler-Hearns fight, which will have a \$25 ticket. We're not going to price ourselves out of the market, and we're not going to price-gouge."

Merchandising is also expected to increase nearly threefold this year. McMahon estimated an expanded catalog of between 35 and 40 percent will bring 1984 dollar volume of \$7 million closer to \$20 million in sales in 1985.

However, the "greatest wrestling extravaganza ever" will reach into several venues for the first time, allowing cities with as little as a 2,000-seat auditorium the opportunity to see it. The multi-million-dollar mar-

Competent consultant can be big help...

Continued from Page 17

judge the cost effectiveness of the consultant's input once the project is completed.

The study is the second in the ethical strategies series of special reports prepared by RHIMI at Purdue. The overall title of the series is "The Insider: Contemporary Issues Challenging the Hospitality/Foodservice Industry."

The first report in the series, "The Development of an Ethical Strategy for Managers of International Hotels and Food Services in Third World Countries," was issued last August. RHIMI reports that requests for this first in the series were "overwhelming," with copies sent on request for hotel and food service companies, industry associations and colleges and universities throughout the U.S., and to foreign countries. It is currently in its second printing.

RHIMI intends to produce additional reports in the ethical strategies series on subjects that were identified as most important in a survey of industry professionals conducted by the Institute. The reports will be researched, written and released on an ongoing basis, rather than a fixed publishing schedule.

A copy of the most recent report is available for a nominal fee from

RHIMI. The Institute was founded in 1978 by the university's Continuing Education Administration and is committed to the national trend toward lifelong learning. RHIMI provides national educational programs dedicated to enhancing individual growth within the hospitality/food service industry. It also develops continuing education seminars and provides training programs for associations and industry, in addition to offering quality design and management consultant services to all segments of the industry.

Worlds of Fun...

Continued from Page 15

the Festhaus will be matched accordingly."

The Inn of the Four Winds was converted into a full-service restaurant from a cafeteria-style location that has been in operation since the park opened 13 years ago. The kitchen and storage area has been greatly expanded, not only to serve the restaurant but to serve as the preparation area for the Festhaus as well.

Bill of fare will include a daily special, 25-foot salad and fruit bar, croissants, seafood and steak. "It will all be table service," said Hudacek.

Other areas of concentration within the park's food service will be offering more packaged meals, especially children's portions.

"We have had good success with offering various fruit combinations for those who are calorie conscious," said Hudacek, "but there is no great emphasis on health foods. Fun foods is still our strong point."

Hudacek said Worlds of Fun's food service operation had its best season ever last year.

Little time...

Continued from Page 14

Sheraton, a 1,200-room hotel. The trade show will be at The Rivergate, across the street. Criteria being considered for selection of future national convention sites include availability of 800-1,000 rooms in one hotel and a trade show site in close proximity. Members at the District VI meeting were asked for criteria input, to be voted upon in July.

District attendees, which numbered 149 including sponsors and spouses, were to hold a business meeting Wednesday (27) to select a site for next year's district meeting and to elect a new district vice president and assistant district vice president. Bill Meadows, Waco (Texas) Convention Center, has served as district vice president for two years now.

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